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Sakti-puja among the bramins is somewhat like *Freemasonry* among the Italians ; an expression intended to convey ideas of every horror, while in point of truth the fullest investigation has shewn, (whatever the Abbé Dubois asserts to the contrary,) that this worship of the Bona Dea has never extended into southern India though advocated by several bramins.* When they find an Englishman credulous on this subject they furnish him with many anecdotes, the fruit of a fertile invention : and such may be found scattered through Dr. Francis Buchanan [Hamilton's] Mysore : and in the same author's posthumous work in three large volumes bearing the title " Eastern India" which Mr. Montgomery Martin has published in his own name as if he was himself the author.

IX.—*Contents of the Kērala Māhātmya, by the Revd.
Dr. Gundert.*

The Kērala Māhātmya or Keral' olpi (in 104 chapters) pretends to be a Purana which Rishi Garga expounded to the Pandicides during their exile. It is written in a poor sort of Sanscrit ; and has hardly any poetical merit. A literal translation of it in Malayalam, and a copious Index ; which however in several places seem to be based on another text than the present, help to recognize the Malayalam appellations in their Sanscrit dress.

The three first chapters bear a separate title Cshatravarananam. They relate the growth of Carta-Viryārjuna's power who ruled on the shores of the Narmada over eight countries (Avanty-ādy-ashta desheshu) and thro' penance received power to subject even Gods and Brahmans to his sceptre. The Gods consult : Narada prepares two charmed balls, one filled with Cshatria glory, the other with Brahma-tejas and gives them to the wives of the Brahman Jamadagni, and of the Cushica king. The balls are interchanged, and the princess gives birth to the sage Vishvamitra, whilst the Brah-

* Every existing Sanscrit book on the Sacti worship may be inspected in the Library of the Madras Literary Society.

man's son, the incarnation of Vishnu enters the world with the mace (parasu) in his hand. He is called Parasu Rama. One day his father, doubting Renuka's fidelity, orders the boy to slay his mother. He does so; and is directed by the Rishis to atone for his sin by destroying Carta Virya and the Cshatrias, the enemies of the Brahmans; a task which he effected in twenty-one expeditions.

§ 4-11. There ruled once in the Treta-yuga a certain Parasu Rama, who wished to crown his prosperous reign by a perfect donation to Brahmans. He assembled all the Rishis and gave the sixteen gifts in profusion; but Vishvamitra observed, that the most sin destroying gift was a grant of land. Accordingly the king made over to the Rishis all the earth within the four seas, with all the blood guiltiness attached to it, by making them drink the water of possession (a ceremony still observed in transfers of ground). The Brahmans thought proper to turn him out of the property he had given away, but with Subrahmanyā's assistance he obtained, by penance, from Varuna the grant of some land to dwell on. The throw of his mace was to determine the extent of the ground: it flew from Canyā Cumāri to Gocarna, and the whole intermediate country of ten yojana's breadth (Malay: version, one yoj), and 100 yojana in length was rescued from the sea. The gods pay a visit to the new country, call it Kerala, the holy land of Parasu Rama; and Shiva condescends to be henceforth worshipped in Gocarna the metropolis (Srī mūla sthānam).

§ 12-47. Brahmans are collected by Parasu Rama to colonize the land: first a poor Brahman from the shores of the Krishna, whose eight sons receive the title of Yogasharyas the eldest being appointed head of all the Brahmans and settled in Vrishādripura (near Gocarna,—others say in Trishivaperur: Trichoor). Other Brahmans are introduced, and settled in different localities; until the number of 64 gramas, or

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colonies, is completed. Of these Brahadvana, Sangameshapura and Ganagrama are the three particularly mentioned :— follows an importation by ship of seeds, and all kinds of animals : with eighteen Lamantas or sons of Cshatria's widows from Brahmans Vaishyas (Mal : version Chettis) Sudras and low casts.—Some of the Brahmans emigrated : to obviate which, distinct customs were instituted for the Kerala Brahmans. One Tarana received the hereditary rule over the temples (ālayanam tantrani) which now arose in many places. They are chiefly Ghata puri (Coombla) Maruca (?) Trichamram close to Taliperambu, and to the salubrious seven hills (Saptashailas. Yeli mala M. Mt. Dilli) Caripuri, or Parasu Ramapuri (a residence of the Colattiri ; M. Carippattu) Subrahmanyapuri with a yearly feast to the god of war, and the residence of the only Cshatria whose life was spared by Parasu Rama. (He is called a Mushica Cshatria, and appears to be the Raja of Coombla) Nileshwara with a Samanta prince (Nelisseram) Mūkāmbica, with a Bhagavati temple. Cāveri and other jungle temples, with worship of demons, sprung from Shiva, Lacshmīshapura (Taliparambu, the glories of which are described in glowing terms: its prince is said to belong to the Mushica Cshatria's family, Bālashailam (Cherucunnu) Sahāy-malaka (Tirunelli in Waynādu, the chief place for offering Shrāddham) Vihāra puri (Pallicunnu, Saraswati temple) 'Swetāranya puri (Tiruwangadu, near Tellicherry) Trishirah-parvatam (Tricherucunnu) with a yearly feast in May, by the celebration of which alone the independence of the country could be secured ; Curumbipuri (worship of a hunting deity and residence of a Samanta the Curumber Raja) Gopacūda puri (the original residence of the Erādi, or Samorin) Vilvādri (Cuvalam) Vātālayam (Guruvāyūr in the Cochin territory whither pilgrims resort to be freed from disease) Sri Cota-rapuri (Codungalūr with service of Bhadracali, and rich bazaars) Tripūrna (Tripunattunpura now capital of the Cochin Raja) with a Sāmanta and rich Concana merchants. Bālā-

puri (Cochi) near the sea : Simpapuri residence of the Samanta Bhānu Vicrama, Anantashayanam (Trevandram or Tiruananta-puram) Sri Vardhanapuri [Tiruwitan cōdu] full of bazaars and elephants the residence of four Samanta brothers ; of whom the first Bhanu Vicrama is to rule over Kerala, whilst his younger brother Rana Vicrama is appointed as Viceroj in Gocarna. Lastly Suchindra [Indra's temple] and Cānyā Cumari.

§47-53. From this journey Parasu Rama returned to Gocärna, and decided several doubtful cases, which gave rise to the different casts of half Brahmans [Ardhabrahmanas] Ambalavāsi [temple servants] Nambidis, singers, dancers, &c. Brahmans were ordered to live with the women of these castes, as well as with the Sudra wives, in order to multiply Brahmanical descendants throughout the country. Some of the half Brahmans [Nambis] were instructed in the use of arms, to defend temples and Brahmans all over Kerala ; which for military purposes is divided into three provinces, each with a head fencing school.

Whilst Parasu Rama was engaged in holy services at Subrahmanyapura, a Demon came with Buddhists, and killed the prince he had placed over the Gocärna province. He went to seek a ruler for the northern parts ; and on the seven hills fell in with three princesses whom he gave into the charge of the Brahman deputies of Lacshmipura, telling the Yogasharya to anoint the first prince born by them. [The intention of the Purana is evidently to describe Kerala as being first under the rule of the united Travancore and Colattiri dynasty, the sway of which being contracted by foreign aggression in the North, paved the way for the independent rule of the Colattiri branch].

§ 54-60. Afterwards Parasu Rama went with the Brahmans of these 64 colonies to his residence near the Vrihannadi (M : Pēr-āru, the Ponani river) and ruled the country for 5300

years. He then assembled the Brahmans, and promised to give them rulers, each for 12 years, and brought from the southern shore of the Caveri an excellent Samanta, whom the Brahmans crowned king on the shore of the Vrihannadi [probably a viceroy of the Chola king]. On the Mahamakha feast of the 12th *year they deposed him, and chose another. Twenty-one kings having thus ruled in succession, the last ran away with the crown jewels. The Brahmans were in consternation, but Parasu Rama promised again indigenous rulers, and located two princesses at Sri Vardhana [Travancore] and Mangalapura. The 3d Subhangi at Lacshmisapura, married to a Brahman. Her son Udaya Varma [head of the Colatiri family] was crowned by the Brahmans as king of the northern half, and presented by Shiva with a ring. He destroyed the Racshasas [Tulu aborigines?] with their families, and furnished a prince Allöhala, to whom Parasu Rama had confided the care of the Subrahmanya temple, for the pride with which he had usurped the Brahminical territory of eight yojanas extent. Parasu Rama blessed the king, exhorted him to righteousness, and prophesied that one of his successors would prefer wicked Brahmins from the Tunga bhadra to the priests of the country; and thus become the author of a general confusion of castes, which would prove the ruin of the country.

From thence Parasu Rama proceeded to Gopacudapuri (Eranadu) and founded the Samorin's dynasty (M. Tāmūttiri) by depositing a Sāmanta virgin with the Brahman chiefs. Her son ruled in Curupuri, endowed with Parasu Rama's sword.—Lavaputra, descendant of Ayodhya Cshatrias, was placed at Bālāpuri (Cochi): his grandson by a daughter married to a Brahman was Rāma Virya, whose dynasty Parasu Rama's white umbrella (M. Vencotta cuda) is inherited.—But finally Parasu Rama declared whole Kerala to be the property of the Brahmins of sixty-four Grāmas, assembled at Gocärna.

* Cycle of Jupiter.

§ 61-73. One of the Rishis took it into his head to undo Parasu Rama's creation, by preventing the celebration of the yearly feast at Trisiracunnu (§ 35) in order that the fools of Buddhas might enter the country. Soon after a clever Buddhist woman named Māli appeared on the seven hills; fascinated a Rishi; and procured to the son she bore to him, the right to the crown; by secretly exchanging her infant against that born to the Queen of the 11th Colattiri King. The stolen child was called Mamāli (name of the Cannanur Bibi, and of the Laccadives belonging to her) and brought up under Cannan's fostering care. A powerful minister Crōda who alone knew of the exchange, abode with the supposed prince, till he was of age, and made him King. But Bhadracali on the coronation day refused to protect a prince, whose mother was a Buddhist, calling him Nasamipa, Nasanga, not permitted to approach, from which he took occasion to build a town and chapel Nasamipapuri (Mādāy or Payangadi, south of the seven hills) where as the Index says the first Buddhist vihāra or palli (chapel, mosketi) was erected. By the ministry of Croda, this 12th King entirely changed the rules of the state; and though kind to Brahmans so as to load them with all manner of gifts, he ruled only through Buddhist officers and subjected to them, the whole country from Canya Cumari to Gocarna (akhitām bhumim ākramya Buddheis sākam sthita tatāt Rājābhut Kerala 'khite) made it abound in pallis and bazars, and during a reign of 35 years set altogether aside the laws of Parasu Rama. When the latter returned, he extirpated the Buddhists, and lopped off the hands and feet of the King. But he, not dismayed, praying to his father the Rishi, had his members restored by degrees; and with the assistance of thirty-five Bhūtas built Vriddhipura (Valarpattam or Billipatam) ruled there also with Buddhas (whom the Index here calls Mapillas) and stole even the holy sword from Taliparambu, so that he reigned securely without an enemy. But Parasu Rama by his course of devotions brought

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the happiness of the infidel King to a sad end. He was detained in the chase by Shiva in disguise; whilst the Queen fell in love with Croda the minister and made offers to him; the flat refusal of which prompted her to devise a speedy revenge. She acts all the part of Potiphar's wife; but the faithful servant, when on the point of being executed, is discovered mounted on the heavenly chariot; and parting, advises the King to go to Mecca, and worship there Vishnu incarnate in all shapes (Vishwa rupavatara) in order to go to Vishnu's heaven. The King did so; and left his maid servant Sphulli to rule in Madai, with Buddhist aid, for evermore. Parasu Rama wished to restore the undiminished sway of the Colattiri princes; but this was rendered impossible by a compromise made in the meanwhile by the rival Queens Sphulli and Subhangi. The taint, brought by this occurrence on the Colattiri family, could only be expiated by the ceremony of Hiranya Garbha; that is, by the creeping of all princes and princesses thro' a golden cow, and by the gift of that, and of a silver bullock to the Brahmans. This holy act to be repeated every 12th year.

§ 74-85. Description of the national feast, maha makham, celebrated at Navayogipura (M. Tirunavai) on the northern bank of the Vrihannadi, where the Brahmans of the sixty-four colonies, the four kings (S. bhūpās Colattiri, Travancore, Samorin, Perimpadappu or Cochin] assemble with all the aristocracy, the 1400 lords [vīrās, M. idaprabhu] 1000 Nāyakas; and all their vassals. Also the Tulu Raja [Tulasibhūs S.] makes his appearance with his Racshasa Nayers. ParasuRama, being there crowned again as king of kings, annexes great promises to the repetition of the feast in every 12th year. [It was celebrated the last time A. D. 1743)—[An account of the 18 gymnastic and warlike exercises (18 āyudhābhyaśa] with the institution of pallestras and headmasters in the four great districts of Kerala. The origin of some caste divisions is explained.

§ 86-95 Particulars about the southern province [Dacshina Kandasya Mahatmya]. Aditya Varma the sister's son of Bhānu Vicrama is made king at Srī Vardhana pura to rule over the land from Canya Cumari to the Ghoza river ; comprising 21 Brahman colonies. Parasu Rama tells him that one of his successors will call for northern Brahmans and honour them above others: from their usurpation, internal commotions will ensue, Brahmans become merchants &c. until Sakas and Buddhas come and overrun the country. A fourth of the whole country is to be set aside, and dedicated to the serpents or Nāgas, the former rulers of the country. Description of the temples at Suchindra, Tiruvanantam &c. also of Bhutapāndya, a holy spot on the eastern border, where the aggression of a Pāndya prince was stopped by divine intervention.

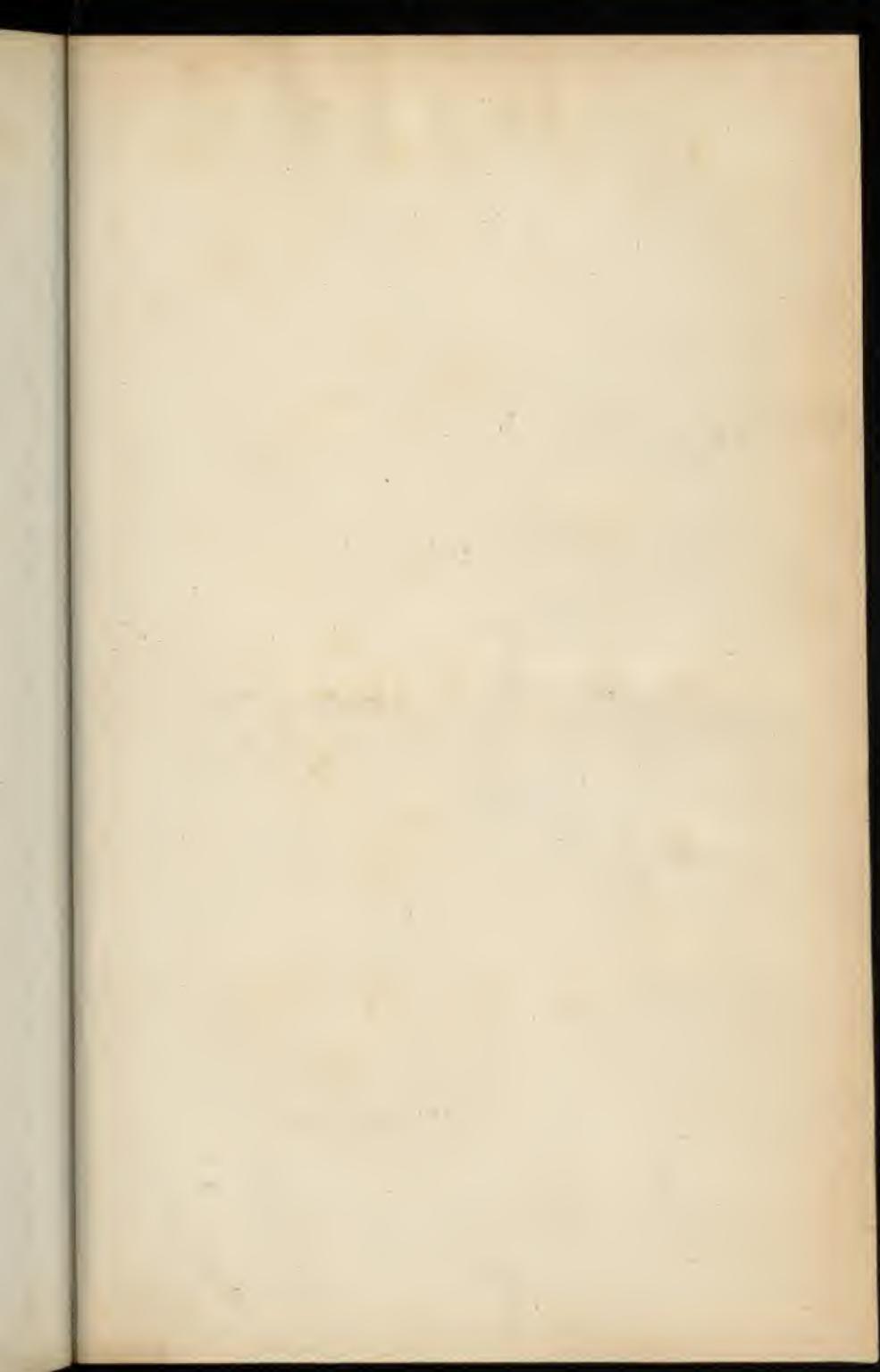
§ 96-100. Colattiri affairs. An Asura Darika attacked the country and encamped on the Srī Mauna Mula Mt. King Kerala Sekhara, the sister's-son of Cula Sēkhara was advised by Cali, the guardian of the land, to build a palace in the S.E. corner of the seven hills. [Index: the Madai palace] when she would come and manifest her glory. The king began the work, and staid with his army on the seven hills. Cali appears and is worshipped by the Asuras with great revellings till she arose, slew Darika, and frightened the Asuras into subjection. Several new temples are built, and dedicated to Shiva, Cali, Vishnu.

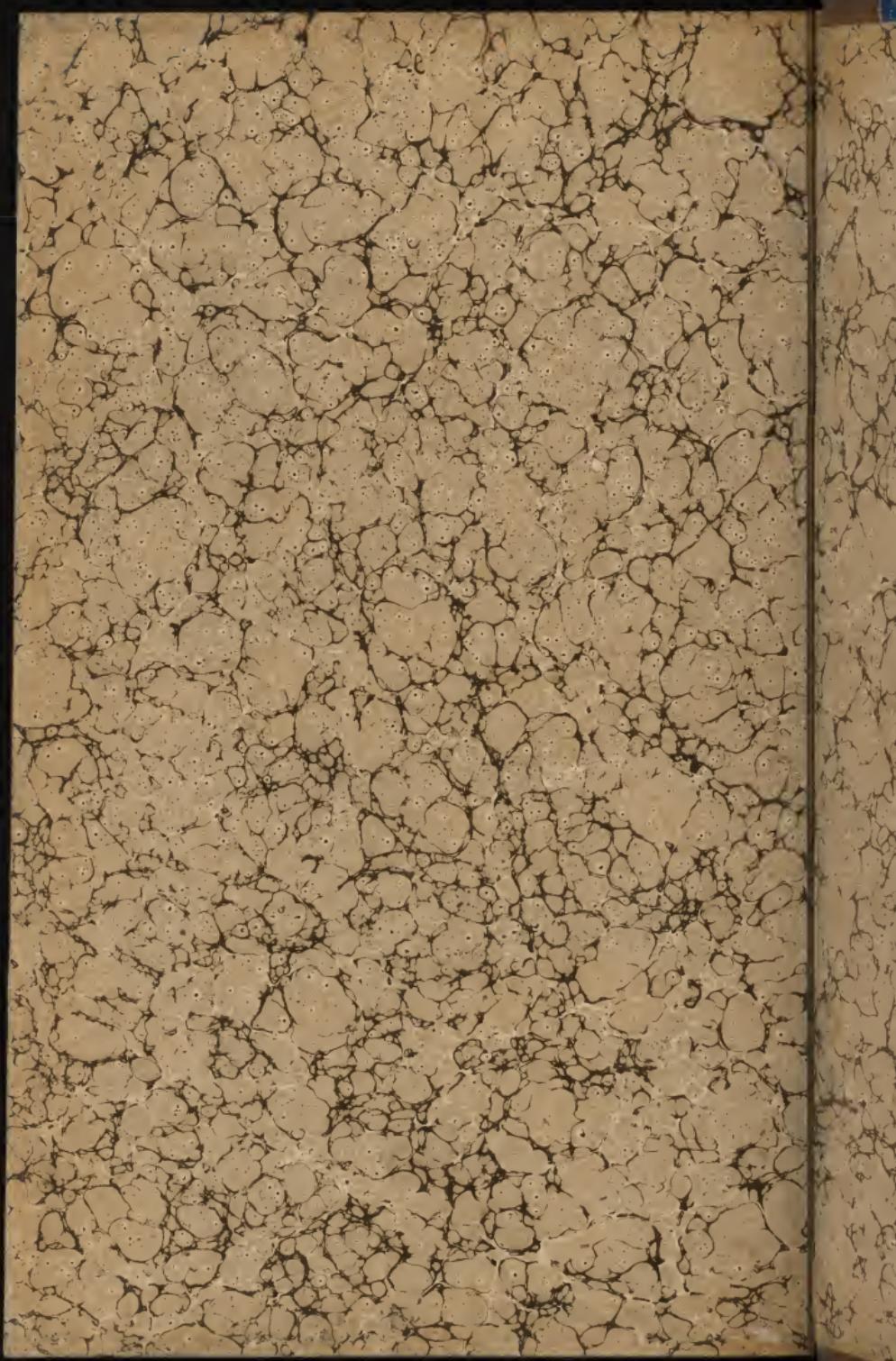
§ 101-102. Genealogy of Colattiri and Travancore (vamsa pāramparya.) Kerala Varma was followed in his just rule over the middle province by his sister's-son Arka Tejasah, he by his famous sister's-son Ravi, he by his nephew Vicramāditya, he by his nephew Sunābha. The succession of Kings in the Southern province: Bhanu Vicrama, then his sister's-son Rana Vicrama; whose nephew, being made king, had from a Brahman woman a son Vandhivirya Chaturbāhu, that followed

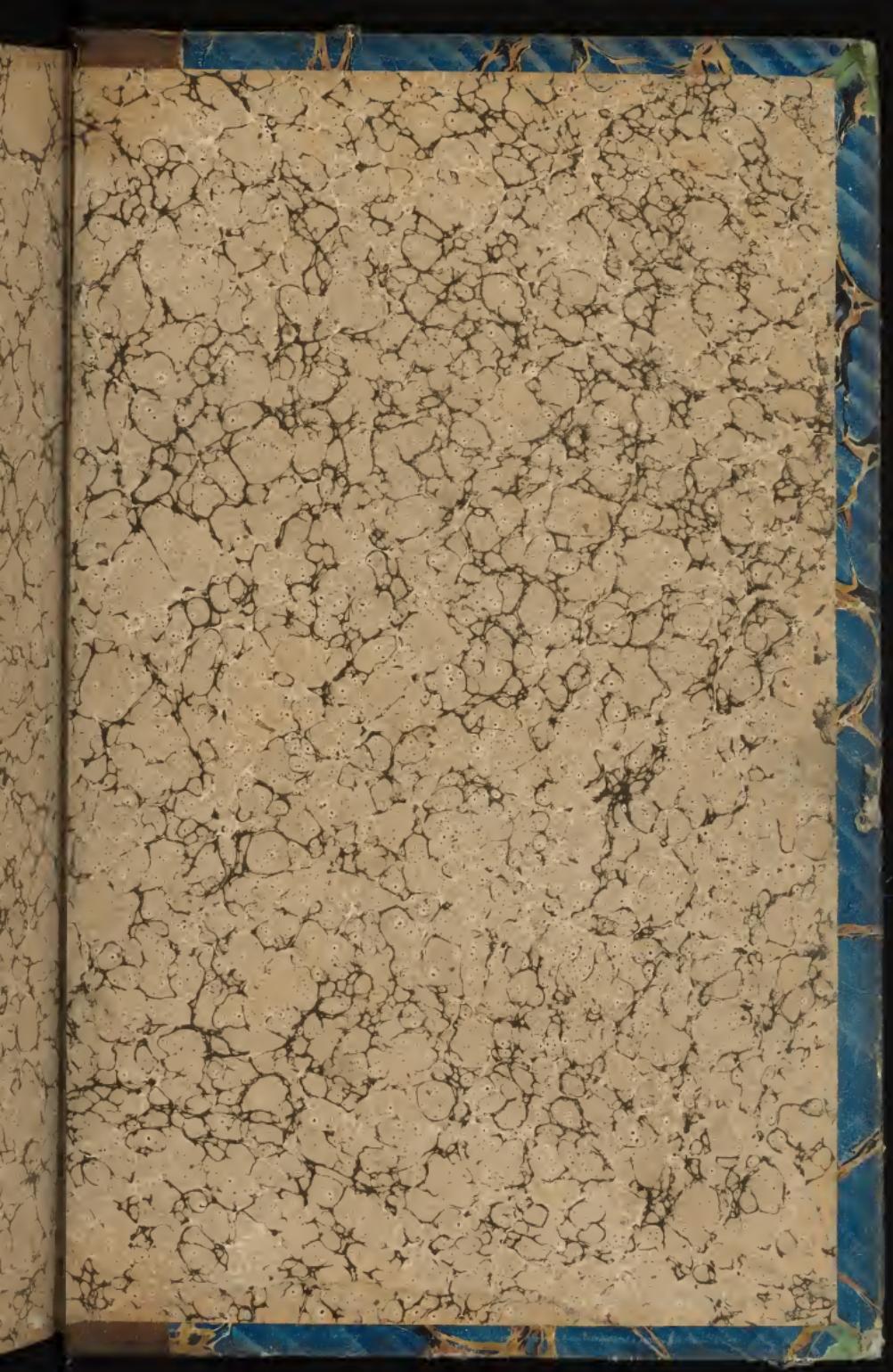
him on the throne. His nephew Jayasākhara, followed by his sister's-son Vijaya Vicrama who rules now in the beginning of the "Dwapara yuga" and was by Parasu Rama's order made also king over the northern province (in Mangalapura) extending from the Cotishwara to the Cumbha river. This northern province is ruled by Viceroy [ardha simhasana] the first Ardha Chuda Prabhas, then his nephew Mohana Vamsajah; his nephew Sringsura; his nephew Indu Sekhara; his nephew Māna Sekhara, who rules at present for evermore, whilst the Valabhu Bala Sekhara [Colattiri] with 4 mantris and 350000 Nayers is enthroned in Angaviddhi [Valarpattanam]. The latter, at a temple dedication, exhorts once more to the practice of virtue; lest Kerala fall into the hands of Sakas and Bauddhas.

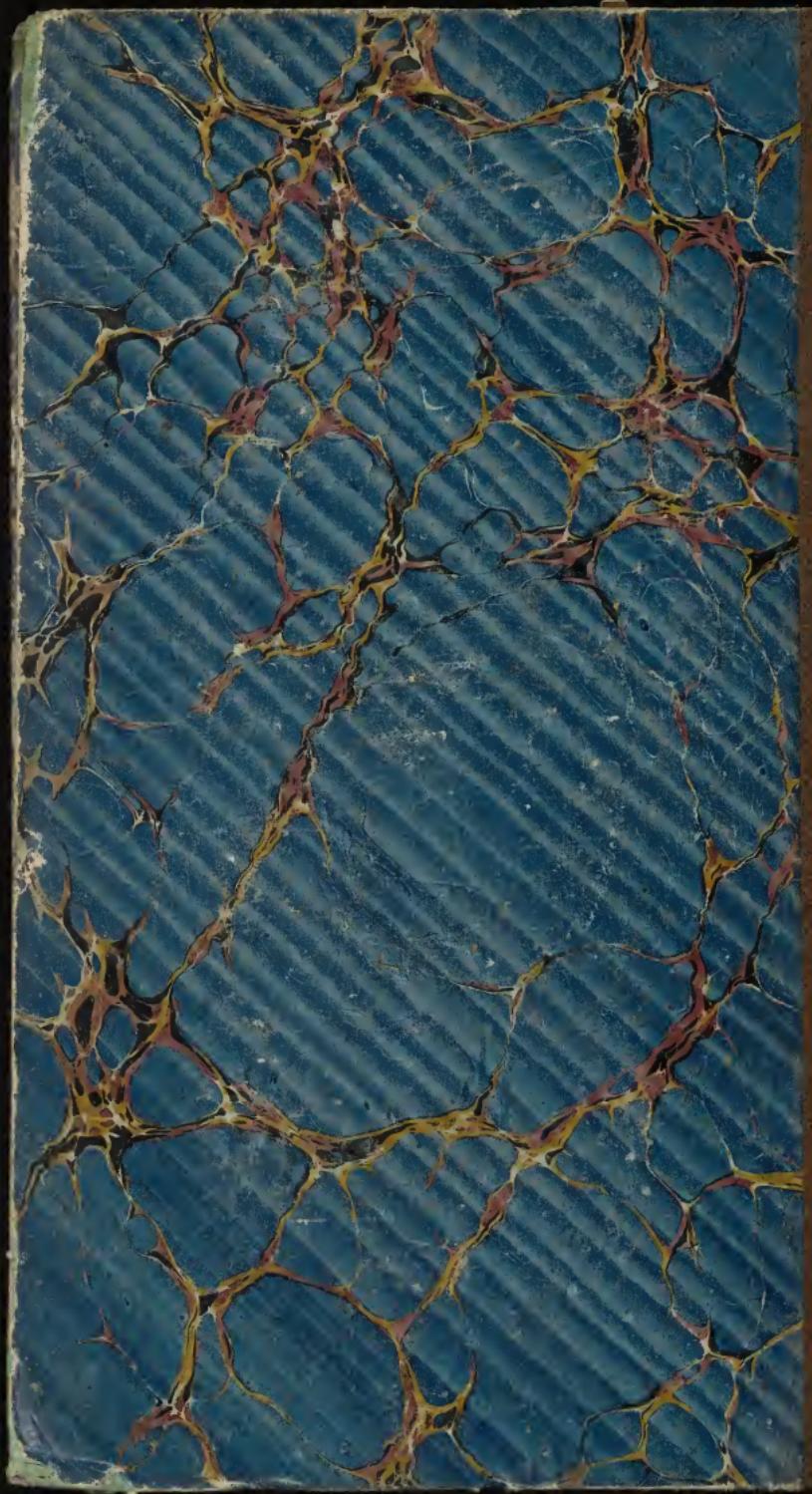
§103, What a useful book! whoever reads or teaches it is freed from all sin &c. with promises of this kind Parasu Rama departs to return to his meritorious penances on the Himālaya.

§104, A long time having elapsed, the Brahmans assembled at Gocarna proposed to try Parasu Rama as he had left them word he would re-appear whenever they should jointly meditate on him. Having made every effort, they saw at last the god coming: but when asked what they wanted him for, they stood ashamed. So he cursed them to live henceforth without his help; and to hold no more their united council at Gocarnam. Yet would he visit Kerala annually after the monsoon on the Onam [Shrāvana] festival: let therefore the Brahmans wait for me! The Rishi concluding this Bhargava Mahatmyam, Keralotbhavam, with the customary praises of its sanctifying powers, received from his hearers remuneration in the shape of 100,000 cows, 1000 elephants and other royal donations.









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